

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A process for producing iron ore agglomerates comprising agglomerating fine iron ore particles in the presence of a binder system that comprises a binder and an alkali metal silicate, wherein the alkali metal silicate is present in an amount of between 0.0001 to 0.08 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate, and wherein the binder system is free of synthetic polymer.
2. (original) The process of claim 1 wherein the binder is carboxymethyl cellulose.
3. (currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and 0.08 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
4. (currently amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
5. (original) A binder system comprising carboxymethyl cellulose and an alkali metal silicate.
6. (new) The process of claim 2 wherein the amount of alkali metal silicate is between 0.04 and 0.08 percent by weight, based on the total weight of dry iron ore agglomerate.
7. (new) The process of claim 6 wherein the alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.
8. (new) The binder system of claim 5 wherein said alkali metal silicate is sodium silicate.